

Pillar of the *community*

The beating heart
of Strathmore Park gets
a thoughtfully-considered
revamp in an artful envelope.



In a time when many people are working through the fallout of extended isolation and economic turbulence, local community centres serve an increasingly important function. As the heart and soul of our local neighbourhoods, these hubs offer invaluable support and a sense of belonging to so many. The importance of these buildings extends far beyond their physical infrastructure as they play a pivotal role in fostering a strong, interconnected community and provide essential services that cater to the diverse needs of residents. From childcare and seniors' programmes to educational workshops and wellness clinics, many offer a wide array of accessible resources that enhance the quality of life for people of all age groups and income brackets. Community centres also create a space where locals can come together, socialise and form meaningful connections and interact through cultural exchange, hobbies and shared interests, helping residents discover common ground and forge lasting friendships. They instil a pride of place and a feeling that we are part of something bigger – impressing a sense of responsibility towards one's neighbours and the greater community as a whole.

When Etch Architecture was engaged to upgrade and enhance the existing Strathmore Park Community Centre in Wellington, they took its weighty importance within the local social fabric to heart. Not only did they rework the centre's floorplan so that it could be more useful and universally enjoyed, they helped turn what was once a humble and unassuming structure into something truly beautiful to behold.

Etch Architecture's Hannah Clarke-Sersen says it was community engagement that was most vital to the firm's role as Project Architect. "In order to design a building that catered for a diverse community and a broad range of activities, we gained an intimate understanding of who the end users were and what they needed from their community centre. The success of this project was due to the people involved who helped to foster a genuine, collaborative design process – the outcome of which is a building the community is excited by and proud of.

"The community centre has had significant planning changes, enabling spaces to be used simultaneously without causing disruption to one another. It features larger and more flexible communal spaces which provide for a diverse range of activities and people as well as opportunities for the community as a whole to interact. The new spaces are better connected, more inclusive and provide accessibility to all spaces."






"The overall planning for the new spaces has been a game changer in terms of creating flexibility and enabling multiple groups to utilise the spaces independent of one another – something that was not possible before," says Architect Dan Eves.

While the functions inside the centre were of fundamental importance, it's hard to ignore the impact of the exterior redesign – which was awarded this year's Resene Total Colour Master Nightingale Award as well as the Resene Total Colour Commercial Exterior Award. Part of the upgrade included a pair of large sliding screens to enable filtering of views in and out of the building in a way that would accommodate different user needs. But the project team saw this as a rich opportunity for an artwork commission that could integrate a meaningful cultural narrative using traditional expressions through pattern and design. Artist Pokau Kato Te Ahuru created a captivating design for the screens, which has become the standout feature of the project.

Titled *He Kura Tipua, He Kura Kairangi*, Pokau's artwork pays homage to the many different iwi (tribes) who once occupied Motu Kairangi (Miramar) and the wider peninsula – acknowledging the rich history held within the community of Strathmore Park. *He Kura Tipua, He Kura Kairangi* is translated as

opposite: At night, the interior light of the newly renovated Te Tūhanga Rau – Strathmore Park Community Centre glows from behind the movable artwork window screens while lighting within the landscaping illuminates the Resene Flash Point, Resene Supernova and Resene Element details from the front. Exterior cladding painted in Resene Sonyx 101 semi-gloss tinted to Resene Double Foundry CoolColour, roof in Resene Summit Roof Semi-Gloss tinted to Resene Double Foundry CoolColour, exterior architraves and window jambs in Resene Lustacryl semi-gloss waterborne enamel tinted to Resene Element, sliding screens in Resene Waterborne Uracryl 802 tinted to Resene Flash Point, Resene Supernova and Resene Element and entry pou (post) and red landscaping details in Resene Waterborne Uracryl 802 tinted to Resene Flash Point.

above: Made from aluminium and steel, the screens are light enough to be moved by community members, providing the option of opening them to reveal the two windows behind or closing them to provide more privacy when desired. They are painted in Resene Waterborne Uracryl 802 tinted to Resene Flash Point, Resene Supernova and Resene Element.

	Resene Alabaster		Resene Flash Point
	Resene Supernova		Resene Element

Resene Double Foundry



above: Pokau Kato Te Ahuru stands in front of *He Kura Tipua, He Kura Kairangi*, the artwork he designed for the screens, which adorns the front of the updated Te Tūhanga Rau – Strathmore Park Community Centre. Based on culturally significant patterns and principles, it pays homage to the different iwi (tribes) who once occupied the area. Exterior cladding painted in Resene Sonyx 101 semi-gloss exterior paint tinted to Resene Double Foundry CoolColour, architraves and window jambs in Resene Lustacryl semi-gloss waterborne enamel tinted to Resene Element, sliding screens in Resene Waterborne Uracryl 802 tinted to Resene Flash Point, Resene Supernova and Resene Element and landscaping details in Resene Waterborne Uracryl 802 tinted to Resene Flash Point.

right: Whether you are inside or outside the building, the beautiful design that makes up *He Kura Tipua, He Kura Kairangi* can still be enjoyed. From inside the hall, Resene Supernova and Resene Element are visible on the back of the moveable screens. Architraves and window jambs painted in Resene Lustacryl semi-gloss tinted to Resene Element and screens in Resene Waterborne Uracryl 802 tinted to Resene Flash Point, Resene Supernova and Resene Element.



'a sacred phenomenon, a treasure of high esteem' and recognises the guardians of the harbour, Ngake and Whāitaitai.

"This important artwork is an integral element to the structure's external fabric, providing a strong and enriching focal point to the public face of the building that welcomes visitors to the centre while rooting it in the strong Māori heritage of Strathmore Park," says Dan.

The range of Resene colours and formulas used for the project inside and out enabled the Etch Architecture team to work closely with Pokau during the paint and colour specification process to get just the right tones to harmonise the artwork with the rest of the building. "The palette of red, yellow and black holds prestige in Māori culture and is inspired by natural colours commonly used within Indigenous artwork. Resene Element, Resene Supernova and Resene Flash Point were chosen for the sliding screens then carefully applied to different elements of the architecture to provide consistency and establish a sense of hierarchy between those components," says Hannah.

The screens were constructed from aluminium and steel, which had to be robust yet easily movable by hall occupants as a way of covering or revealing a pair of large windows. The screens' detailed design, which was complex to construct, also needed to ensure that the variation in colour was able to be applied cleanly and crisply. Added to this challenge was the fact the screens, when moved, would partially obstruct the adjacent cedar rainscreen. Since this rainscreen also features a pattern that is still visible through the screens, the two patterns needed to align perfectly.

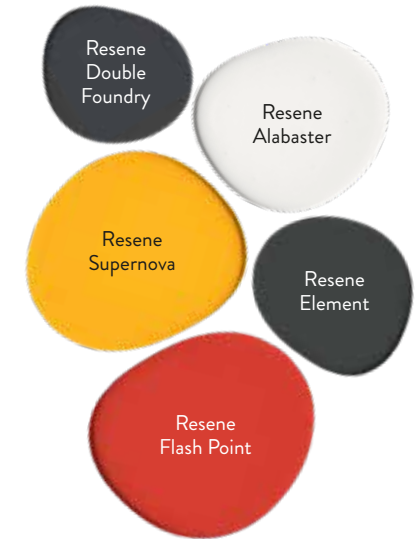
"The striking combination of colours and shapes have activated the corner of the building creating a strong focal point, both inside of the building and out," says Hannah. "The building stands confident yet welcoming and is something the community can be proud of. On the interior, features in Resene Flash Point, Resene San Juan and Resene Element were chosen to complement the community centre's fresh new branding and have helped in creating a welcoming space through the playful vibrancy of the bold hues. On the exterior, Resene Double Foundry CoolColour creates a neutral backdrop to allow the colourful sliding screen and warm cedar rainscreen to be the focal point. This dark colour also recedes, which nestles the building into the plantings beyond."

Even the landscaping plays a part in making visitors feel welcomed, with concrete benches that beckon towards the doors bookended with flashes of bold colour. "The landscaped fingers

at the front of the building create a series of alcoves that can be occupied by the community at any time. The ends of the fingers are painted in Resene Flash Point, guiding guests up to the main entrance through this added vibrancy,” explains Dan. “The pou (post) – which is also painted in Resene Flash Point – can be seen from a distance and has helped to improve the visibility from the street and connects it with the main entry.”

“The large, internal sliding door between the Raukawa Lounge and the hall is also painted in Resene Flash Point, which works well as a bold colour to help articulate the main entry into the hall and further highlights the strong axis between the hall and the courtyard,” adds Hannah. “And of course, no successful interior is without a great white! We chose Resene Alabaster, which provides the perfect backdrop for all of the colour, texture and materiality throughout the spaces.”

Kane Armstrong, Managing Director for Focus Projects Ltd (FPL), says that his team’s biggest challenge for the build was the construction and integration of the artwork and timber rainscreens – but the final effect was well worth the effort. “These elements required exact measurements, angles and careful coordination to truly honour its amazing design. Dedication and collaboration between the trades ensured all the challenges were overcome to hero this feature of the building.



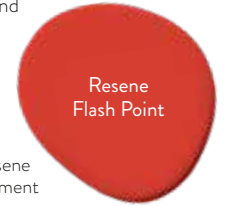
left: Strathmore Park Community Centre, prior to its striking transformation.

below left: At the centre’s reopening, Te Ātiawa Iwi Chairman Kura Moeahu provided the pūrākau (origin story) regarding the formation of the land, the history of Te Motu Kairangi (Miramar Peninsula) and surrounding areas, meanings and values attributed to manu (birds) and other inhabitants from the area. Kura says inspiration for the centre’s new name – Te Tūhunga Rau – came from the symbolism of manu who lived, and in some cases still live, on Te Motu Kairangi and refers to the arrival of many peoples to the area through the centuries. Exterior cladding painted in Resene Sonyx 101 semi-gloss exterior paint tinted to Resene Double Foundry CoolColour, roof in Resene Summit Roof Semi-Gloss tinted to Resene Double Foundry CoolColour, exterior architraves and window jambs in Resene Lustacryl semi-gloss waterborne enamel tinted to Resene Element, sliding screens in Resene Waterborne Uracryl 802 tinted to Resene Flash Point, Resene Supernova and Resene Element and entry pou (post) and red landscaping details in Resene Waterborne Uracryl 802 tinted to Resene Flash Point.





left and far left: Architect Dan Eves says the Resene colours for Te Tūhunga Rau – Strathmore Park Community Centre were selected to ensure the spaces felt light, bright and vibrant. “The base colour inside, Resene Alabaster, provided an excellent backdrop. The selected colours sought to reference the artwork of the screens as well as complement the branding for the community centre.” Entry post and coloured landscaping details painted in Resene Waterborne Uracryl 802 tinted to Resene Flash Point, exterior sliding screens in Resene Waterborne Uracryl 802 tinted to Resene Flash Point, Resene Supernova and Resene Element, exterior cladding in Resene Sonyx 101 semi-gloss exterior paint tinted to Resene Double Foundry CoolColour, roof in Resene Summit Roof semi-gloss tinted to Resene Double Foundry CoolColour, exterior architraves and door and window jambs in Resene Lustacryl semi-gloss waterborne enamel tinted to Resene Element, interior walls and ceiling in Resene SpaceCote Low Sheen tinted to Resene Alabaster and interior architraves, skirting boards, window and door jambs in Resene Lustacryl semi-gloss tinted to Resene Alabaster.



- Resene Alabaster
- Resene Element
- Resene Supernova
- Resene Double Foundry

“We are immensely proud of the transformation. Our favourite part of the finished result is how the building is now better tailored to serve the community. Te Tūhunga Rau is so important to the Strathmore Park community and to be able to improve this building to better serve the community and it’s amazing volunteers was very rewarding for the FPL team.”

“The wider project team was fantastic to work with,” Kane adds. “Having a project team with the client, consultants and main contractor all working together allowed for this project to truly be a successful build.”

Strathmore Park Community Centres Manager Fiona Prestidge says the project has already made a marked impact. “It’s not an over-statement to say that everyone loves the transformed community centre: the aesthetics (both inside and outside), the functionality of the spaces, the light and the indoor-outdoor flow. So many elements are individually impressive, but collectively, it takes many superlatives to describe how it has been received by our community.”

Fiona agrees that it’s the exterior artwork that really brings the “wow factor” and that the new Resene paint colours inside and out have made a huge difference on how the building looks and feels. “The paint colours give real impact and feel modern and fresh. While the colours capture some of the essence of Te Ao Māori and connect with the community centre’s branding, they also appear to resonate with the ethnically-diverse people in our community, too.”

“I can’t speak highly enough of Dan from Etch Architecture,” Fiona adds. “He always focused on the community needs and aspiration. He delivered way more in his design than we ever asked for or imagined.”

Since reopening in March, the facility also carries a new name: Te Tūhunga Rau. “Tūhunga can be translated as a roost or a perch of birds or a place to stand. Rau can mean hundred or, alternatively, the feathers of birds. So metaphorically, Te Tūhunga Rau can be translated as ‘The Place of a Hundred Perches’ or ‘Where Feathers Find a Place to Stand,’” explains Te Ātiawa Iwi Chairman Kura Moeahu. “What this means is Te

Tūhunga Rau is a place where the manuhiri (birds looking for a place to settle) or visitors from around the world that make our community home can come and find a place to make their own while celebrating who they are in their own special way.”

This notion of a gathering place where people from many backgrounds are welcomed, nurtured and share values is grounded in Māori values, but it also seems to be the case for the community itself. For those who live in or visit Strathmore Park, it’s a comfort to know they can always find a safe and welcoming place to perch at Te Tūhunga Rau. **BW**

design Etch Architecture, www.etcharchitecture.co.nz

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painting Frame Contracting Ltd, www.framecontracting.co.nz

client Wellington City Council, www.wellington.govt.nz

colour selection Etch Architecture and Pokau Kato Te Ahuru, www.instagram.com/te_ahuru_arts

screen manufacturing Aztech Engineering, www.aztechengineering.co.nz

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